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Atari Online News, Etc.
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->From the Editor’s Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
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Sorry, we’re really late this week! Just too much going on here that it’s been difficult doing anything that I’ve wanted. Yes, the past few weeks have been of a personal disaster status. First, my father passed away last month and I’m trying to deal with getting his estate in order - a daunting task.

Then, last Sunday, we got a phone call from my wife’s family in Boston. The family-owned three family home was afire. We immediately drove to the site, and watched as the home burned. The entire family got out safely, thankfully. Three buildings burned, and will have to be torn down. Some of the family is staying with us for now until they can determine what they will be doing. The rest of the family is staying with other relatives or friends considering what they will do.

A couple of days later, my wife was there helping relatives get prescriptions replaced, as well as other immediate necessities; she was there for most of the day. We was getting ready to come home, and the transmission on my car died. She spent the night with her cousin, and returned home the next day with a rental car, and her sister.

A few days later, her sister was going to another room and tripped and fell, breaking her arm! We had to have some EMTs come and take her to the hospital.

So, it’s been a rough time around here lately trying to help my in-laws start to get their life back together, a few small steps at a time. It’s not an easy task.

So, even though I realize that I don’t need to do so, I just wanted to explain what’s been happening and relate why we’re late this week (and may be late in subsequent weeks).

Until next time...

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->In This Week’s Gaming Section - PS4 To Arrive Before Next Xbox!

"""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""" Next Xbox Coming in 2013!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
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PlayStation 4 To Arrive Before Next Xbox

The next PlayStation console, colloquially referred to as the PlayStation 4 but codenamed "Orbis," is to arrive before the new Xbox, according to new reports.

News site VG247 cites an unnamed source in predicting that the PlayStation 4 will get the jump on Microsoft's machine, at least in terms of release timing.

The Xbox 720 - again, an informal term, with the codename "Durango" - is to launch in time for Christmas 2013, according to information previously published by VG247, with key development studios briefed in February. Sony is believed to be holding its own developer summits in May and June.

Nintendo's successor to the Wii, known as the Wii U, was treated to an official announcement at the Electronic Entertainment Expo in June 2011, though representatives for both Microsoft and Sony have indicated that their own machines won't be subject to the same treatment at this year's event.

Next Xbox Coming in 2013, With Upgraded Kinect As Standard

The next Xbox will be with us by the end of 2013, will come with an upgraded version of the Kinect sensor as standard, and packs two graphics chips and a Blu-ray drive, according to the most recent report.

The report comes by way of VG247, a site that obtained first photos of the PlayStation Vita while it was still in development and leaked Grand Theft Auto V's Hollywood backdrop ahead of time.

A more powerful central processor, said to be between 4 and 6 cores strong, would mean that development studios can leverage Kinect's voice and motion control features without having to make sacrifices elsewhere.

The machine is to make greater use of internet connectivity, not least as an anti-piracy measure, but won't entirely switch over to App Store-style digital distribution, instead electing to include a Blu-ray drive just as the PlayStation 3 did.

It's possible that the two graphics chips are intended for development

kits only. However, a bespoke setup is in line with the Xbox 360’s inner workings, and Microsoft would have over a year and a half to reduce production costs - AMD’s equivalent Raedon HD 7990 graphics card will cost an eye-watering $849 when it launches on April 17.

Either way, the implication is that Microsoft is keen to court studios like Epic Games (Unreal Engine), EA DICE (Frostbite 2.0), and Crytek (CryEngine 3), whose game engines are designed for cutting edge PCs rather than 6-year old consoles.

The first Xbox cost $299 when it launched in 2001, and the 2005 Xbox 360 was initially available in two configurations at $299 and $399.

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A-ONE’s Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Cyber-Defense Slow Due to Generation Gap

Sluggish moves to counter the rising threat of cyber-attacks can be blamed on a generation of policymakers out of touch with rapid technological change, a senior US official said Monday.

"The truth is there are a lot of senior officials in many countries who barely even know how to use an email," Rose Gottemoeller, US acting under-secretary for arms control and international security, said during a visit to Estonia.

"The change will come with the new generation," she told the audience at a lecture delivered at the Estonian IT College, in the Baltic state’s capital Tallinn.

Estonia is one of the world’s most wired nations, and its high-tech savvy has earned it the nickname "E-Stonia".

Home to NATO’s cyber-defence centre, founded in 2008, the nation of 1.3 million has been at the forefront of efforts to preempt cyber-attacks.

Estonia has bitter experience in the field.

A politically charged dispute with its Soviet-era master Moscow in 2007 was marked by a blistering cyber-attack blamed on Russian hackers - though the Kremlin denied any involvement.

Gottemoeller also said governments should consider incorporating open-source IT and social networking into arms control verification and monitoring.

"In order to pursue the goal of a world free from nuclear weapons, we are going to have to think bigger and bolder," she explained.

"New concepts are not invented overnight, and we don’t understand the full range of possibilities inherent in the information age, but we would be remiss if we did not start thinking about whether new technologies can augment over half a century of arms control negotiating expertise," she added.

EU Commission Urges Euro MPs To Hold Off ACTA Vote

The European Commission urged the EU Parliament on Wednesday to hold off on voting on a controversial global anti-online piracy pact until judges rule on its legality.

The commission is expected to refer the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA) to the European Court of Justice in a few weeks, hoping to settle if it respects fundamental rights such as freedom of expression and data protection.

EU commissioners agreed Wednesday on the legal question to put to the Luxembourg-based judges: "Is the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA) compatible with the European Treaties, in particular with the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union?"

The EU Parliament is expected to vote on ACTA in June, but EU Trade Commission Karel De Gucht urged the assembly to wait until the court ruling, saying it would bring "clarity" about its legality.

ACTA aims to beef up international standards for intellectual property protection.

But fears it may curtail online freedoms by attacking illegal downloading and file-sharing have sparked angry protests from Internet users across Europe.

"Considering that tens of thousands of people have voiced their concerns about ACTA, it is appropriate to give our highest independent judicial body the time to deliver its legal opinion on this agreement," De Gucht said.

"This is an important input to European public and democratic debate. I therefore hope that the European Parliament will respect the European Court of Justice and await its opinion before determining its own position on ACTA."

Twenty-two of the 27 EU states as well as other countries including the United States and Japan signed ACTA in January but the treaty has yet to be ratified anywhere.

China Shuts Political Websites in Crackdown

Two Chinese political websites said Friday they had been ordered by authorities to shut for a month for criticising state leaders, the latest move in a broad government crackdown on the Internet.

Officials told the Mao Flag website, named after late leader Mao Zedong,

and the Utopia website, also known for a leftist political stance, to close for "rectification", the sites said in separate announcements.

Authorities said their postings had "maliciously attacked state leaders" and given "absurd views" about politics, according to statements posted on the websites.

Those statements, dated Friday, were later removed. The operators could not be reached for comment and content on the sites was unavailable.

The latest crackdown comes after a surge in online rumours in China, including one about a coup led by security chief Zhou Yongkang, following the March dismissal of rising political star Bo Xilai.

Two other sites, China Elections and April Youth, also appeared to be shut on Friday but operators claimed they were down for maintenance and staffing reasons.

The Utopia website was a supporter of the policies of Bo, who was removed as Communist Party chief of the southwestern metropolis of Chongqing in mid-March.

During his time in the city, he ran a hardline crackdown on crime and a populist Maoist revival campaign that included singing patriotic songs, which was praised by Utopia.

China launched a sweeping Internet crackdown last week, highlighting official unease ahead of a leadership transition later this year.

Efforts to quell "rumour-mongering" come as President Hu Jintao and China’s other top leaders step down from their Communist Party posts in a secretive 10-yearly leadership transition that will culminate in early 2013.

Authorities shutdown 16 other websites, arrested six people and slapped temporary curbs on two popular microblog services, preventing users from posting comments.

China, which has the world’s largest online population with over half a billion users, has long blocked content it deems politically sensitive as part of a vast censorship system known as the Great Firewall.

But the rise of social media, in particular Twitter-like microblogs, have proved more difficult to control and have become a popular outlet for expressing discontent towards the government.

’Anonymous’ Says It Will Hack More Chinese Sites

The hacking group Anonymous said Friday it would continue targeting China, after announcing it had hacked hundreds of Chinese websites to protest against Internet censorship in the country.

Most of the sites Anonymous China claimed to have hacked were working normally early Friday, although some still carried error messages, among them an official site for the ruling Communist Party in the southern city of Hezhou.

But the group, which announced its existence last month via Twitter, told AFP in an email it would continue targeting Chinese sites.

"It will keep going. The targets are selected," it said.

Anonymous said this week it had hacked 300 Chinese websites and posted messages to the government and the Chinese people.

One read: "To the Chinese people: your government controls the Internet in your country and tries to filter what he sees as a threat to him."

Another said: "Dear Chinese government, you are not infallible. Today websites are hacked, tomorrow it will be your vile regime that will fall."

China has the world's largest online population, with more than half a billion users, but its government tightly controls the web, using a vast and sophisticated censorship system known as the "Great Firewall".

This week's hackings came after the government last month shut down websites, made a string of arrests and punished two popular microblogs after rumours of a coup linked to a major scandal that brought down a top politician.

Twitter Takes Hard Stance Against Spammers

In an effort to combat the increasing number of spam tweets on its platform, Twitter has announced its newest spam-fighting weapon: the law.

The microblogging site is not just going after individuals who send annoying or potentially malicious messages known as spam, it is targeting the 'bad actors' who create tools and programs used to distribute spam on Twitter.

"This morning, we filed suit in federal court in San Francisco against five of the most aggressive tool providers and spammers," said Twitter in an April 5 post on its blog. "With this suit, we re going straight to the source. By shutting down tool providers, we will prevent other spammers from having these services at their disposal. Further, we hope the suit acts as a deterrent to other spammers, demonstrating the strength of our commitment to keep them off Twitter."

It s good news for consumers, especially those who have a penchant for clicking on links within tweets that promise the latest Justin Bieber song download, free iPads or sexy pictures of women.

Twitter is taking additional steps to fight "@mention" spam and malicious links hidden with link shorteners. It also encourages its users to report and block spammers by following the steps listed in its help center.

Both Twitter and Facebook have had to ramp up their spam-fighting efforts in the wake of a new breed of 'social spam' that has been built to target unsuspecting users on social networks.

According to a recent article in The New York Times approximately 4% of all content shared on Facebook and 1.5% of all tweets were considered to be spam in 2010.

Yahoo To Lay Off 2,000 Employees

Yahoo Inc will lay off 2,000 people, or 14 percent of its workforce, in its deepest round of job cuts in years as new Chief Executive Scott Thompson tries to jumpstart growth while saving hundreds of millions of dollars.

Wall Street was lukewarm on the move, after two previous CEOs failed to find an answer to rivals like Web-search giant Google and the Facebook social-networking site.

Sunnyvale, California-based Yahoo, which ended 2011 with some 14,000 employees, said it would save $375 million annually from the cuts, and will incur a pretax cash charge in the second quarter of $125 million to $145 million.

The company declined to comment on severance details.

Some analysts were skeptical about the layoffs, which had been widely expected.

"You can’t cut your way to revenue growth," said Colin Gillis of BGC Partners. "What people want to see out of Yahoo is they want to see a plan and provision for revenue growth."

Thompson, who took over from the outspoken and occasionally profane Carol Bartz, argued the changes would transform Yahoo into a leaner outfit focused on its core businesses which were identified as "co re media and communications," "platforms" and "data."

"The changes we’re announcing today will put our customers first, allow us to move fast, and to get stuff done," Thompson said in a memo to employees on Wednesday, obtained by Reuters, adding that the changes will results in a "smaller, nimbler, more profitable" company.

"We are intensifying our efforts on our core businesses and redeploying resources to our most urgent priorities," Thompson wrote.

Macquarie Research’s Ben Schachter saw the layoffs as a start in determining the new direction of the company.

"Scott Thompson is not there to tweak the business," Schachter said. "He saw something in the assets to make him think there was potential."

A Yahoo spokeswoman said that every organization within the company was affected by the layoffs, but that some groups were affected more than others. She declined to specify which particular groups were the most affected.

Yahoo said it would provide more details of its plans when first-quarter results are released on April 17.

The layoffs follow Yahoo’s declining revenue due to competition from Google and Facebook. Last year, Yahoo’s revenue totaled $4.98 billion, compared with Facebook’s $3.71 billion with just 3,200 employees.

Yahoo is also fighting a battle with hedge fund manager Daniel Loeb.

Loeb, who runs Third Point, is seeking to appoint four new directors to Yahoo's board. Third Point, with a 5.8 percent stake in Yahoo, is the company's largest shareholder.

U.S. Investigates Possible Internet Threat to NYC

U.S. law enforcement and counterterrorism officials are trying to figure out the significance of recent occurrences on websites believed to have close links to al Qaeda, including a graphic some fear could be an attack threat directed at New York City.

The graphic contained a picture of the Manhattan skyline superimposed with a Hollywood-style caption that says: "ALQAEDA - coming soon again in New York."

It was posted on Monday by a site called the Ansar al Mujahiddin Arabic Forum, or AMAF, a militant web forum which allegedly has close connections to the Afghan Taliban and a key militant leader in Jordan.

At the same time, two Internet forums authorities believe have official al Qaeda sanction have been down for nearly two weeks, said Evan Kohlmann, an expert who monitors militant websites for government entities and private businesses.

A spokesman for the FBI office in New York said the Joint Terrorism Task Force was investigating whether the posting was authentic and that while every threat is taken seriously "there is no specific or credible threat to New York."

New York Police Department chief spokesman Paul Browne said his officers were "investigating the origin and significance of the graphic ... which appeared today on a few Arabic-language al Qaeda forums that remain online at the moment."

Browne noted, however, that the graphic was posted in a section of the forum labeled "art and design". Kohlmann said that this raised questions as to whether the messages really constituted a serious threat. "That's not where an important threat would be posted," Kohlmann said.

A U.S. intelligence official said federal agencies would examine the AMAF graphic to "evaluate" its significance.

The U.S. official said that government agencies also were aware of the interruptions in traffic on the two main websites which purportedly have official sanction from al Qaeda.

Kohlmann identified these as Arabic-language forums called Shamukh and al Fidaa. He said that they were recognized as official al Qaeda forums because they were where the group's couriers first post "official" videos produced by what remains of al Qaeda's core leadership and its affiliates, such as al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, based in Yemen.

Kohlmann said that in the past, the two official websites had sometimes gone offline, but never for the length of time they have lately been down. He said that usually when the sites went offline some kind of explanation was posted.

But he said that this time, no explanation appeared until Monday, when a message on one of the sites said that it would be up and running again shortly after a few more "tweaks."

Kohlmann said that the outages began roughly around the time of two potentially significant recent events: the arrest in Spain of a suspect who some investigators believe was an administrator for some militant websites, and the shootout in Toulouse, France in which Mohammed Merah, a militant who shot dead a rabbi, three children and three French soldiers, was himself killed by police.

Kohlmann said speculation in the online world was that the forums had gone offline because they were attacked by government or non-official hackers of some kind.

The outages of al Qaeda-linked sites were first reported by the Washington Post.

A person familiar with U.S. government monitoring of militants said that because U.S. authorities have erected legal barriers severely restricting the launching of offensive cyber-attacks by U.S. agencies, it was unlikely the U.S. government played a role in the militant websites' current outages.

Google s 7-Inch Tablet Held Up Till June

Google is planning to release a 7-inch tablet running Android 4.0 Ice Cream Sandwich, but it s pushing the launch to June 2012 in order to tweak the device and bring down its price tag.

That s the report from The Verge, which states that Google s branded tablet, co-created with Asustek, is heading to store shelves this summer to take on Amazon s Kindle Fire. Citing unnamed sources, the story claims that the tablet currently will run consumers about $249, which is higher than a previously rumored tag of $149-$199. In order to be competitive with the $199 Kindle Fire tab, Google is reworking the design of the device to bring down its costs. The less the tablet costs to make, the less Google can sell it for to consumers.

We previously heard rumors that Google was working on a branded tablet with the hopes of bringing it to market at a pretty low price tag. Originally, the tablet was set to launch in May, but reworking the design will hold it up a month. What The Verge story says won t hold the tablet back, however, is Android 5.0. Previous reports suggested the new software, which Google is working on this year, believed to be codenamed Jelly Bean and rumored to be designed for tablets the same way Android 3.0 Honeycomb was, would hold up the launch as Google attempts to get it ready for its new tab.

Apparently, that s not the case, mostly because waiting for Jelly Bean would hold up the tablet significantly as Google engineers continue to work on the software. There s some speculation that Google wants to release its 7-inch tab ahead of a rumored offering from Apple known as the iPad Mini. Either way, it seems Google isn t interested in waiting for Jelly Bean before it launches its branded tablet, so the device will reportedly run Android 4.0 ICS instead.

A branded Google tablet could be a big boon for the Android tab market, which has seen plenty of contenders struggling against the iPad and each other, and most have really failed to take off. The one exception, it seems, is the Kindle Fire, which is getting by partially because of its extremely low price, and partially because of Amazon s content library backing it up. Google has a similar infrastructure that it could put behind its tablet, plus the power of its brand to sell it.

But the last time Google attempted this model, it was with its Google Nexus smartphone, which was a struggle for the search giant to sell online. A tablet should be easier - it s Wi-Fi only, The Verge reports, which will remove the need for carriers. This summer, it seems, we ll see if Google has the chops to become a force in the Android tablet market.

Google Creates A Spectacle with Project

If you think texting while walking is dangerous, just wait until everyone starts wearing Google’s futuristic, Internet-connected glasses.

Directions to your destination appear literally before your eyes. You can talk to friends over video chat, take a photo or even buy a few things online as you walk around.

These glasses can do anything a smartphone or tablet computer does now - and then some.

Google gave a glimpse of "Project Glass" in a video and blog post this week. Still in an early prototype stage, the glasses open up endless possibilities - as well as challenges to safety, privacy and fashion sensibility.

The prototypes have a sleek wrap-around look and appear nothing like clunky 3-D glasses. But if Google isn’t careful, they could be dismissed as a kind of Bluetooth earpiece of the future, a fashion faux-pas where bulky looks outweigh marginal utility.

In development for a couple of years, the project is the brainchild of Google X, the online search-leader’s secret facility that spawned the self-driving car and could one day let people ride elevators into space.

If it takes off, it could bring reality another step closer to science fiction, where the line between human and machine blurs.

"My son is 4 years old and this is going to be his generation’s reality," said Guy Bailey, who works as a social media supervisor for Kennesaw State University outside Atlanta. He expects it might even be followed by body implants, so that in 10 years or so you’ll be able to get such a "heads-up" display inside your head.

At its best, the goal is to make your life easier by putting the tools now at your fingertips in front of your eyes.

"There is a lot of data about the world that would be great if more people had access to as they are walking down the street," said Jason Tester, research director at the nonprofit Institute For the Future in Palo Alto, California.

That said, "once that information is not only at our fingertips but literally in our field of view, it may become too much."

Always-on smartphones with their constant Twitter feeds, real-time weather updates and "Angry Birds" games are already leaving people with a sense of information overload. But at least you can put your smartphone away. Having all that in front of your eyes could become too much.

"Sometimes you want to stop and smell the roses," said Scott Steinberg, CEO of technology consulting company TechSavvy Global. "It doesn't mean you want to call up every single fact about them on the Internet."

Still, it doesn't take much to imagine the possibilities. What if you could instantly see the Facebook profile of the person sitting next to you on the bus? Read the ingredient list and calorie count of a sandwich by looking at it? Snap a photo with a blink? Look through your wall to find out where electrical leads are, so you know where to drill?

"Not paint your house, because the people who looked at your house could see whatever color they wanted it in?" pondered veteran technology analyst Rob Enderle.

Wearing the glasses could turn the Internet into a tool in the same way that our memory is a tool now, mused science fiction writer and computer scientist Vernor Vinge. His 2006 book, "Rainbow's End," set in the not-so-distant future, has people interacting with the world through their contact lenses, as if they had a smart phone embedded in their eyes.

"Things we used to think were magic, we now take for granted: the ability to get a map instantly, to find information quickly and easily, to choose any video from millions on YouTube rather than just a few TV channels," Google CEO Larry Page wrote in a letter on the company's website Thursday.

In Google's video, a man wearing the spectacles is shown getting subway information, arranging to meet a friend for coffee and navigating the inside of a bookstore, all with the help of the glasses. It ends with playing the ukulele for a woman and showing her the sunset through a video chat.

Google posted the video and short blog post about Project Glass on Wednesday, asking people to offer feedback through its Google Plus social network.

By Thursday, about 500 people did, voicing a mix of amazement and concern about the new technology. What if people used it in cars and got distracted? What about the effect on your vision of having a screen so close to your eye?

Some asked for prototypes, but Google isn't giving those out just yet. The company didn't say when regular people can expect to get their hands on a piece of Project Glass, but going by how quickly Google tends to come out with new products, it may not be long. Enderle estimates it could be about six months to a year before broader tests are coming, and a year or more for the first version of the product.

With such an immersive device as this, that sort of speed could be dangerous, he cautions.

"It’s coming. Whether Google is going to do it or someone else is going to do it, it’s going to happen," Enderle said. "The question is whether we’ll be ready, and given history we probably won’t be. As a race we tend to be somewhat suicidal with regard to how we implement this stuff."

Facebook Relationship Status Update Sparks Gun Fight

Gunshots were fired at a Georgia Waffle House Friday morning over a Facebook post. The fight broke out at the late-night eatery around 5 a.m. local time. The source of the dispute: someone’s relationship status on Facebook.

According to authorities, one group of women was inside the Augusta restaurant when another group of ladies approached. An argument ensued regarding someone’s relationship status on Facebook, and the fight was eventually taken outside where one of the women fired four shots in the air. That woman is now in police custody.

The other women involved fled the scene in three vehicles, all of which are thought to have contained firearms. No additional details about the incident have been released.

This is undoubtedly not the first debate that has ensued from someone changing their Facebook relationship status. Going from ’Single’ to ’In a Relationship’ on the site has become a common way to announce a new relationship. If things get complicated there’s a status for that, and breaking up can make just as big a splash on the social network as announcing a new love.

If you think changing your relationship might incite a parking lot brawl, check out our guide to changing your Facebook relationship status without alerting your friends.

Grade School Teacher s Aide Fired for Refusing To Hand Over Facebook Password

Kimberly Hester, a grade school teacher’s aide in Michigan, was fired for refusing to hand over her Facebook password to her supervisors. Hester posted a picture of a co-workers’ shoes and pants bunched around her ankles on Facebook in April 2011 with the caption, "Thinking of you." She posted the picture in jest, but a parent who’s on her Facebook friend list saw the image and reported it to Frank Squires Elementary where Hester was employed, prompting the investigation.

Teachers have gotten in trouble for Facebook status messages before, but in Hester’s case, it’s her refusal to hand over her password that actually got her fired. One of the supervisors from the Lewis Cass Intermediate School District (ISD), the regional service center for education in Michigan, even wrote her a letter when she refused to give them her password for the third time. Part of the letter read: "... in the absence of you voluntarily granting Lewis Cass ISD administration access to you[r] Facebook page, we will assume the worst and act accordingly." Lewis Cass wanted to put Hester on a paid administrative leave before they fired her, but she chose to go on an unpaid leave because she believes she did nothing wrong. She plans to use the letter she received to sue the school

district.

An increasing number of companies and schools have started asking employees and students for their Facebook passwords. The practice has been growing at such an alarming rate, that Facebook released its official stance on the issue, telling its users that they have the right not to comply with their employers' request. Several politicians including Michigan's own State Representatives Aric Nesbitt and Matt Lori have been pushing for bills that will make the breach of privacy an illegal practice. Unfortunately, it hasn't been going very well for them - the House of Representatives recently rejected a legislation that would protect your passwords from employers' prying eyes.

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